

Consul's Corner

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Tax Season: It's just around the corner

The IRS knows that no one likes tax season. They know the forms are intimidating and can be complicated. They know people feel overwhelmed at the thought of filing. In an attempt to ease the stress caused by this annual event, they have put together a useful pamphlet especially for US taxpayers living abroad. The pamphlet, Federal Tax Information for US Taxpayers Living Abroad (Publication 4732) is available online on their webpage <http://www.irs.gov>.

For example, did you know that if you are a US citizen or a resident alien, the rules for filing income, estate, and gift tax returns including paying estimated tax are generally the same whether you live in the US or



Filing your taxes doesn't have to be an awful experience. The IRS is here to help!

abroad?

Also, US income tax returns are due on April 15th. If you reside overseas, though, you are given an automatic two month extension to file. Any taxes due, however, MUST be paid by April 15 to avoid paying interest and, possibly, penalties. This also applies if you are in military service on duty outside the United States and Puerto Rico, except if you are serving in a combat zone.

The pamphlet also lists other IRS publi-

cations that would be useful for international taxpayers. These forms are all available on their website, www.irs.gov. By clicking on the link 'More forms and publications', you will see publications available for your perusal online.

Three in particular that would be helpful for taxpayers overseas include Publication 54, *Tax Guide for US Citizens and Resident Aliens Abroad*, Publication 514, *Foreign Tax Credit for Individuals*, and also Publication 593, *Tax Highlights for US Citizens and Residents Going Abroad*. Check their website for pamphlets and information specific to your unique needs and situation.

Beyond helpful pamphlets, the website

(Continued on page 4)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Do you know what your kids are watching?	2
Cheaper international calling options	2
Vets losing APO/FPO	3
Overseas Americans Week in April	4
Taxes, cont.	4
Contact Info	4
Burma Shavings	4

UPCOMING HOLIDAYS FOR THE EMBASSY:

- February 12 (Friday) - Union Day
- February 15 (Monday) - Presidents' Day
- April 13 - 16 (Tuesday - Friday) - Thingyan (Water Festival)
- April 27 (Tuesday - Full Moon of Kason
- May 31 (Monday) - Memorial Day

Do you know what your kids are watching?

You can go to Bojoke market and buy any number of videos or computer games. The same can be said for the markets in Bangkok or other easily accessible Asian cities. You may never have even heard of many of these movies and games, and if it is not a 'legitimate' copy, the blurb on the back may or may not be an accurate description of the contents on the disk.

What is a concerned parent to do? Now there is a website that rates and reviews movies beyond the simplistic 'PG' or 'R' ratings.

<http://www.kids-in-mind.com/>

The site helps adults to determine whether a movie is ap-

propriate for them or their children, according to their own criteria. These are not ratings based on age, but 3

Just because a movie has animated characters does not mean it is a movie appropriate for children.

objective ratings for Sex; for Nudity and Violence; and for Gore and Profanity on a scale of 0 to 10. They also explain in detail why a film rates high

or low in a specific category, and include instances of substance use, a list of discussion topics that may elicit questions from kids and messages the film conveys. The system is based on objective standards, not the viewer's age or the artistic merits of a film, allowing adults to determine whether a movie is appropriate for their children according to their own criteria. The do not "condemn," "critique" or "criticize" movies. And they don't "praise" or "recommend" movies either...

Calling overseas and without spending big bucks

Have you been frustrated by the seemingly endless increases in the cost of making a phone call, especially to another country? The Internet offers multiple lower-cost options for making calls, with options for both handheld cell phones and for computers. Generally, the connections are fast and clear, and the savings astounding, especially when compared to traditional calling plans in the U.S.

Please see the link that follows. The article includes



What could be better than using an internet connection for phone calls? Spending less money to talk to family and friends who live far away!

specifics for different calling options. Okay, so the options might not work as well here

in Burma, but you could certainly take advantage on your next trip out of the country.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/07/technology/personaltech/07basics.html?emc=eta1>

Vets losing APO/FPO privileges

As of 31 December 2009, close to five thousand American veterans living abroad will no longer be able to use their APO and FPO addresses at US embassies and consulates. Those veterans fortunate enough to have APO or FPO addresses at military installations and Defense Department personnel officially assigned to embassies and consulates will not be affected.

For many who rely on these addresses for Tricare Mail-Order Pharmacy deliveries and other vital mail (bank, Social Security, IRS, absentee ballots, etc.), and particularly those who live in areas where local mail service is not reliable, this will cause real hardship.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), the American Legion and the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), the National Association of Uniformed Services and other military fraternal organizations have all been alerted to the situation.

Representative Timothy Walz

(D-MN), member of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, is attempting to find a solution to this quandary, which is based on the State Department's inability to



Vets now have to find an alternative to using APO/FPO boxes at embassies and consulates.

assume costs related to mail forwarding for military retirees, and the Department of Defense's inability to transfer funds to the State Department to underwrite the costs. Walz, the highest ranking enlisted soldier ever to serve in Congress, has both served overseas and worked abroad.

The Director, National Security and Foreign Relations, of The American Legion, has assured close to five thousand American veterans living abroad who lost their APO and FPO addresses at US embassies and consulates at the

end of 2009 that "The American Legion has written letters to both the Department of Defense and Department of State urging that mail privileges through the US Embassies concerned be restored." He also suggested that a Resolution be submitted to the National Headquarters of the American Legion to be considered for adoption at the Spring National Executive Committee Meeting.

Only a small portion of veterans living abroad are affected by the State Department's inability to assume costs of forwarding to military retirees with mail service via embassies and consulates. Other veterans, fortunate enough to have APO or FPO addresses at military installations – and Defense Department personnel officially assigned to embassies and consulates – will not be affected.

A number of larger military bases – Madrid, Rome, Italy and Portugal, for example – have given affected veterans a military PO box.

Overseas Americans Week coming in April

Will you be in the Washington, DC area April 19-23? If so, please join ACA (American Citizens Abroad) for their annual Overseas Americans Week.

This is a great opportunity to speak with ACA, as well as other overseas groups such as AARO (Association of Americans Resident Overseas) and FAWCO (Federation of American

Women's Clubs Overseas).



Will you be in Washington, DC during April? If so, try to schedule some time to visit ACA's Overseas Americans Week activities.

These diverse groups bring home to Washington news and views of Americans abroad.

Please see the events section on the ACA website, www.americansabroad.org for more information.

Taxes, continued

(Continued from page 1)

also offers downloadable tax forms to complete for submission. You can find those forms at www.irs.gov/formspubs. Here you'll be able to find the forms and schedules you need to complete in order to properly file. Another source that might be helpful for completing your tax forms (e.g. if you receive

your salary in a foreign currency), is the website <http://www.oanda.com/currency/historical-rates>. This is the website recommended by the IRS for preparing tax returns. The dropdown menus allow you to select any currency pair and your date range, so you can tailor the calculation to suit your needs.

Don't procrastinate! Take the

bull by the horns and get your tax returns completed and submitted. It probably won't be as complicated as you originally thought. Good luck with your taxes!

American Embassy Rangoon

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Fax: (95-1) 650-480
E-mail: consularrangoon@state.gov
Website: <http://rangoon.usembassy.gov>



Coming to Burma? AmCits register with us!

Please register with us! We welcome your visit to our Consular Section during American Citizen Service hours (Mondays through Fridays, 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.). We are here to help you with routine and emergency services. We can better serve you if you are registered with us. Drop by and complete your registration form. Alternately, you may register online at <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>

If you are already registered with us, please let us know if you have changes (e.g. new baby, new phone number, moved, etc).

Please call us if you have any questions.

Burma Shavings: Want to get it?

If you would like to receive the Embassy's weekly newsletter the "Burma Shavings" electronically, please send an email to the Community Liaison Officer at clorangoon@state.gov.

The Burma Shavings includes Embassy events, community events, classifieds, etc.

Also, if you would



Subscribe to the Burma Shavings to get info about goings on in Rangoon.

like to advertise a classified or event in the Burma Shavings, please email [Bur-](mailto:BurmaShavings@state.gov)

maShavings@state.gov with your wording and contact information.